10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1/Burma
Karen AP7

feel safer there than with any other people in the country. 152
When Karens are convinced of one's honesty and truth- [672]
fulness and genuine friendliness they will prove themselves to be true friends and they will inconvenience themselves no end to make that friendship good.

In common with some of the other Hill peoples of 533
south-eastern Asia, they have a great love for music. Their own native music is built on the pantonic scale. It consists of weird tunes in a minor key that are plaintive, sad and tremulous. They use the harp, and make 534
crude instruments resembling the violin out of bamboo, and a kind of xylophone played with two small mallets. The drum is also used in various forms.

The educated Karens, most of whom are Christians, 533
have almost entirely abandoned their old plaintive native 177
airs for the happier Western music. It began with the hymns of the Christian Church of which a fine and large collection has been translated into both the Sgaw and Pwo languages, and which they delight to sing. In addition to these, the young people love picking up the popular airs sung in musicales and in the cinemas. It is not uncommon to hear these songs even in remote villages.

During the past quarter century there has grown up a new music among the people, mostly among the Christians. Every Christian village has its choir. They love to sing together. The leaders of these choirs have taken Western airs and have combined them with touches of their native music and composed new songs for them. Hundreds of these have been published by mimeograph and a few of them have shown real musical ability on the part of their composers. The Karens have, as a rule, soft and velvety voices that lend themselves to good music.

10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

533 177 Trained choirs have sung in the cities before exacting audiences and have won praise. Because of their former experiences of being subjected to exploitation, they have taken to the American Negro spirituals and sing them with a great deal of expression. Here again they have adapted some of these to their own life and composed new tunes and songs to fit their own conditions. Probably the suffering of these war years will further develop their folk music.

173 183 To the Karen the golden age was in the dim past. It was the old men who were wise. They say: "The generation gone before had wisdom. Now we are but children. Therefore the customs that have come down to us are sacred and cannot be broken without great danger."

They are hedged about with taboos many of which they hold so tenaciously that they are still more or less in the grip of their fears; and while this lasts progress will be slow if not almost impossible. Those who made the big break and became Christians have a different attitude and yet, even with them, the old customs have not entirely lost their hold.

943 183 Their fear of change prevents improved methods of living. This is especially true in the hills where for untold generations they have followed the *taung-ya* (mountain cultivation). This involved the sacrifice of a fresh piece of forest each year for their rice fields. When urged to adopt a more economic method, such as terracing or rotation of crops, they would reply that their fathers and grandfathers grew rice by this method, and being poor ignorant Karens they could not do any differently.

19: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1910) 1922 API Burma
Karen API

The Karen have been addicted to the use of liquor. Their feasts and religious observances have been occasions for drinking. It is reported that the Brecs are accustomed to store their grain in two bins, one (often the larger one) for that of which liquor is to be made, and the other for that which is to be used as food. On the plains I have not found the Karen greater drinkers than their neighbors. With the decay of the old rites and the spread of Christianity the evil seems to be on the decline. Among the members of the Baptist churches, however it may be in the other denominations, total abstinence is enjoined.

The Karen are lovers of music. In the early days they accompanied the chanting of their poems on their primitive harps and other instruments. The people of the Pegu Yomas, Tenasserim, in the delta of the Irrawaddy, have interesting tunes, which have been in use from the olden times. In other districts they have contented themselves with the rythm of chanting and moaning, melodies being conspicuous by their absence. The Maw Lay and other religious sects have had their own songs, which may be said to correspond to Christian hymns. With the introduction of Christianity came the music of the Western hymn-book, and to this the Karen have taken with their whole hearts. They love to sing and do not grow weary of it, however late the hour. Occidental music has taken such a hold on those who have become Christians that they have almost entirely given up their native music. A few hymns are sometimes sung to adaptations of their old tunes; but they prefer the Western melodies, and few of the young people know any other. They learn the new tunes readily and are able to sing glees and anthems by ear after a moderate amount of practice. Their voices are much softer than those of the Burmese and blend well in choruses. Some of the young women have very sweet voices, which seldom become harsh and rasping. While traveling in the hill country I was delighted one evening with the sweet voice of a young woman, which came floating up from the stream where she was drawing water. She was singing an old "hta" or poem, while I listened unobserved behind a clump of bamboos. No sooner did I step into the open than she ceased, and I could not persuade her to continue the song.

One discovers but few indications of a love of beauty among the Karen. They make little attempt to ornament their houses or their implements, so that the evidence of their possessing a sense

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER XVII

MUSIC, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, AND DANCING

KAREN MUSIC

The Karen use the pentatonic or five-toned scale, which has belonged to the Eastern nations since early times. This scale consists of the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth intervals of the modern octave. They appear to know nothing of different musical keys, but in starting a tune try one pitch or another until they have found the range suitable to their voices. They do not keep accurate time in their singing, but hold one or another tone as suits their fancy, introducing quavers on the long notes and sliding down or slurring from one tone to the next. Some words and phrases they repeat over and over again, thereby suggesting the repetitions in an anthem. As they sing in minor strain, their music has a quality of sadness. 533

On their instruments they play tunes that are not rendered vocally. This is especially true of the melodies they play on the pipes ("hpi ba"), rather than of set compositions. These pipes are capable of producing really beautiful music, consisting largely of improvised runs and variations, demanding no small skill.[1] [534]

It is to be regretted that, with the acceptance of Christianity, the Karen have almost entirely dropped their own music for that of the West. Hymns particularly appeal to them. Perhaps this is due to their desire to leave their pre-Christian life altogether behind them, as well as to the more animated quality of our Western music. However, a few Karen melodies have been adapted to hymns and have been recently incorporated in their hymnbook through the efforts of the Rev. E. N. Harris, of Toungoo. 533 177

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The Karen have seven or eight primitive musical instruments, besides drums, cymbals, and gongs. Those in common use are the 534

[1] For this note on Karen music and the score of the accompanying "hta" I am indebted to Mrs. U. B. White, of Rangoon.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

534 sion. It comprises a number of slender bamboo tubes ranging from a foot or more to three or four feet in length, bound together in a bundle by rattans. "Hpi ba" is the name applied to the instrument by the Karen, who play it with considerable skill and use it frequently. It is said to be of Talain or of Siamese origin.[4]

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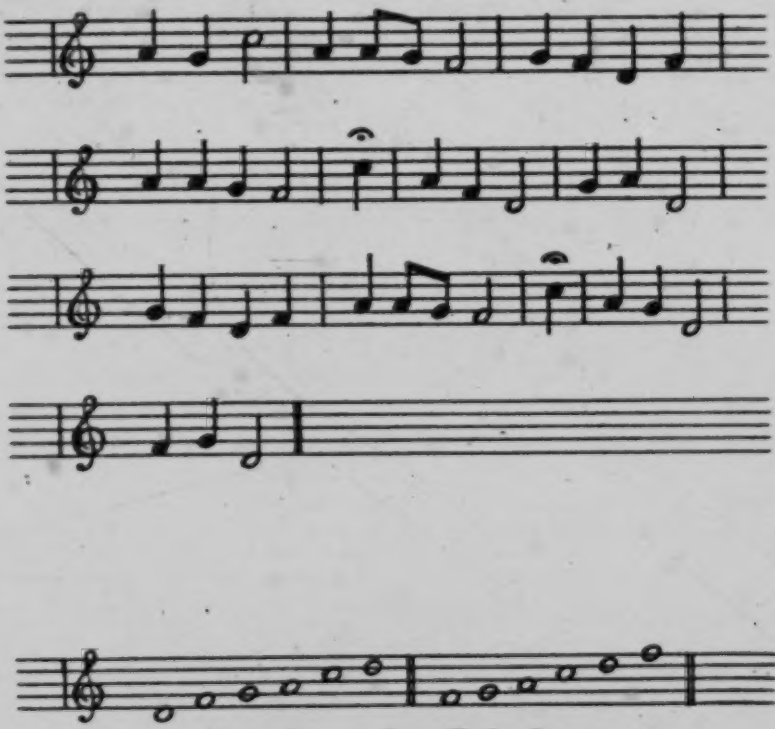

Musical Score of a Karen "Hza" or Pipe

The Toungoo Karen, either the Ker-ko or the Padaung, make an instrument, which suggests a bag-pipe, by inserting five bamboo tubes in a gourd. The player blows into the stem of the gourd and fingers the holes in the tubes to produce the different sounds.

[177]

[4] These graduated-pipes exhibit a striking similarity to those found in Malaysia, Borneo, and the Philippine Islands: Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, Vol. II, p. 145; Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, Vol. II, p. 222, and the figure opposite p. 222; Cole, *Bontoc Tribes*, p. 134.

Illustrations of musical instruments used by the Bangala and Bajanda tribes of the Congo region, including just such a harp as the Karen have, are given in *George Grenfell and the Congo*, Vol. II, p. 719. An instrument like the graduated-pipes of the Karen is shown in A. W. Nieuwenhuis's *Quer durch Borneo*, Vol. II, p. 142.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

says: "Fan away all illness, failure, stupidity, and wretchedness." Then fanning upwards, he says: "Fan on all prosperity, health, and power." After this he ties a thread on the child's arm and gives it the name that he and the mother have chosen for it.

Among the Sgaw Karen I find that no special naming customs exist. However, according to our Western ideas, a curious selection of names prevails. One little girl was called Miss Thunder because, as was explained to me by her father, she was born at the time of a thundred storm. The name of a personal peculiarity, a color, an ancestor (especially of one who was prosperous or powerful), a flower, an animal, or a month may serve as a personal name. I know of men who bear such names as Tiger, Eel, Pole Star, Gladness, Yellow, Teacher-come (the person with this last name was born on the day a missionary first visited his village), besides many others equally odd.

Nicknames are in vogue among Karen children, as they are among their fellows in the Western hemisphere. Nicknames of a special class are those given by parents to disguise their love of, and their satisfaction in, their offspring, in order to keep the demons away from the latter. Such names suggest parental contempt and lack of affection in the hope of deceiving the evil spirits into thinking that the parents can not be injured through the injury or loss of their children. This practice is illustrated by names like Stink-pot, Rotten-fish, Lame-dog, etc., which often stick to men through life.[1]

Although boys are much more desired than girls, the latter are not mistreated or abandoned, as they are in China and other Oriental countries. The Karen possess a considerable degree of parental affection. Only in extreme danger, as formerly in the case of raids, would parents desert a female child. My observation is that Karen parents are too indulgent to their children and do not exercise as much control over them as would be good for them. Twins are not uncommon among these people, and triplets are not unknown. Twins are considered as having only one "k'la" between them. If one of the pair dies, the early death of the other is feared. Its wrist is, therefore, carefully tied with a cord, and every precaution is taken to prevent the escape of the "k'la." I presume that

[1] Parents sometimes express their satisfaction over the male sex of a child by applying to him a nickname indicative of the presence of the male genitals. Such appellations, as terms of endearment, are regularly recognized names and carry no opprobrium with them.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Karen AP7

181
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333. KARENS BRINGING ELEPHANTS TO MARKET.

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"a spirit of equality, and governed by the moral influence of its natural heads alone." (Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I., p. 407.) The chief of these elders is called *Sawkè*; he gives his name to the village. The faults of the Karéns are their dirt, their addiction to drink, and a degree of superstition so extreme that a motherless infant is refused adoption for fear of turning the wrath of a vengeful demon upon the foster-mother. In epidemics of cholera and small-pox the Karéns abandon their villages in panic fear. The Karéns are shorter but of stouter build than the Burmans and Talaings, and of much fairer complexion. But their name of "white" Karén is derived from their clothing. Very characteristic is their short upper arm. Young people of splendid physique may be seen; but the conditions of life are so hard, and malaria is so prevalent in the forests, that the population remains stationary—by the census of 1891, 633,600. The toilsome Karén finds lightness of heart in the liquor he brews, a remarkable contrast to the vivacious and abstinent Burman. The contrast is borne out in the dreary wail of the Karén music and the bright and exuberant cadences of the Burmese. Karén children grow independent very young (No. 355), and begin their heavy outdoor labour soon. Early physical exertion possibly accounts for the second moral quality noted above. The hill-cultivation is greatly at the mercy of the seasons, from burning-time in April to harvest in October. The hardship is aggravated by a superstition of divination-bones (*Kyoyyo*) which often tabooes the most eligible sites. Scarcely have the crops been garnered than the clearing of a fresh site for the village begins.

[164]
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334. KARENS GOING OUT TO WORK.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Karen AP7

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346. KAREN WITH DECOY-COCK.

Men and women labour out-of-doors till about sixty. The oldest women who can move make their daily journey for water, which is fetched and stored in joints of the giant bamboo. Old men occupy themselves with plaiting mats and baskets, and repairing gear. None are idle. The Karéns are acquainted with the medicinal virtues of many plants, such as bitter barks for ague. But all sickness and misfortunes are ascribed to the *nats*. Offerings and charms are relied on more than medicines. When a person dies, the body is treated with great respect, and every kind of offering is made to propitiate the spirit. The corpse is cremated, and the bones are buried at a place devoted to this use (*ayó-daung*), often at a distance, owing to the migrations of villages. Here a shrine is erected, consisting of a miniature hut, upon which a rude carving of a bird always figures. This symbolizes a mythical creature which conveys the spirit over rivers and chasms on its wanderings. For some time after a death, cotton threads are stretched beside the footbridges for the spirit to pass by on, without meeting the living. A shrine similar to that at the *ayódaung* is made at a place where two roads cross, and at each shrine the clothing of the deceased, and sometimes new clothing and utensils, are dedicated. It is at funerals that the dreary Karén music is chiefly heard. The tones are very widely contrasted. The dirge is accompanied by the notes of the *pdzi*, a great drum of bronze, cast in the Shan country, in a single piece, though the metal is only the eighth of an inch thick. The *pdzi* is struck on the end with a padded hammer for the deep fundamental tone, and flicked on the side with a stick to bring out harmonics an octave or two higher.

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347. DECOY-COCK IN THE CIRCLE OF SNARES.

000 The *Karennî*, or "Red